

NATIONAL CENTRE
FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS

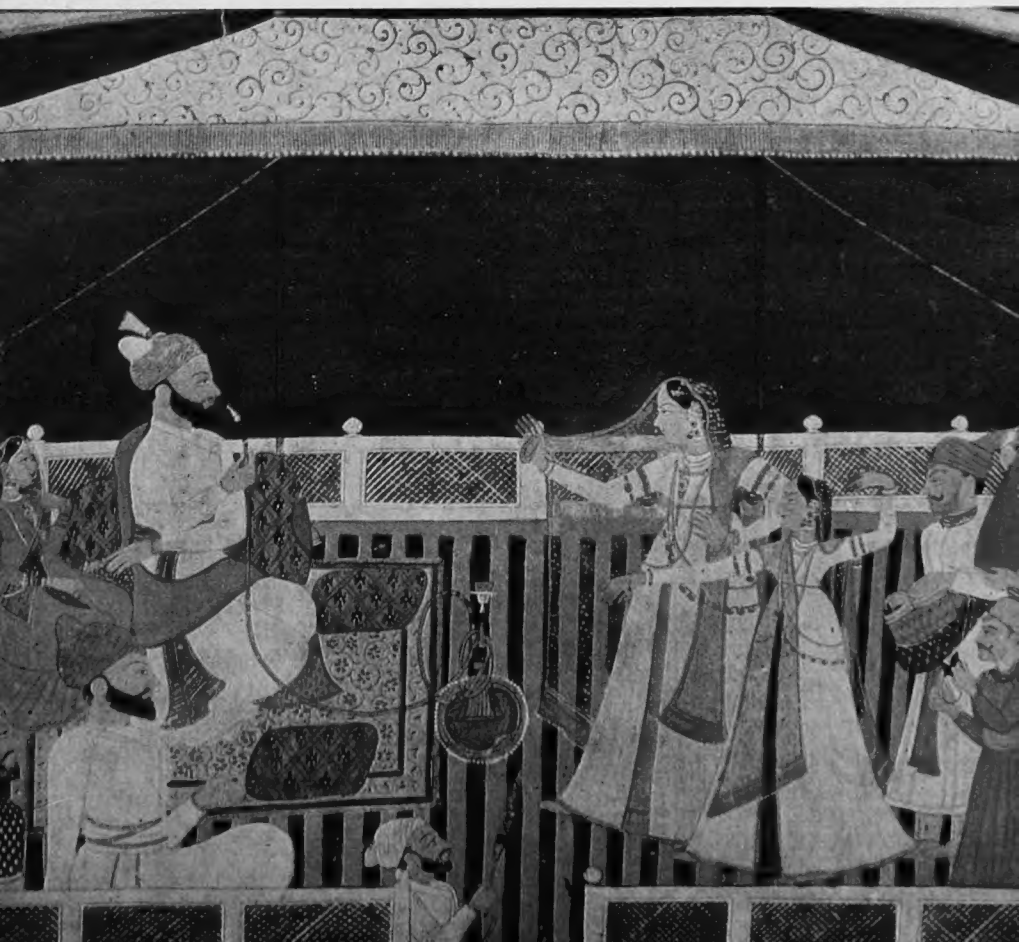
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Cover Picture:

Raja watching a dance and music programme, circa 1775.

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Those Moon-Faced Singers Music and Dance at the Royal Courts in the Panjab*

B. N. Goswamy

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The confusion and the controversy surrounding the identity of that charmingly eccentric prince, Balwant Singh¹, tends sometimes to dim the pleasure of imbibing the atmosphere of his cultured, if small, Rajput court. Art-historical discussion tends not only to overshadow the work of that great painter, Nainsukh², who recorded with such vividness and sensitivity events in the life of that prince, and the things that delighted him, it also keeps one from absorbing in full measure the mild inebriation that seems to have belonged to Balwant Singh and his court, steeped as they were in music and dance. These were arts that were not of marginal interest at his court: to Balwant Singh they appear to have been vital, things that sustained the spirit. As we see him sitting on a moonlit terrace listening to his favourite

↑ A group of singers at a court, circa 1740.



Raja Balwant Singh watching a dancer, circa 1750.

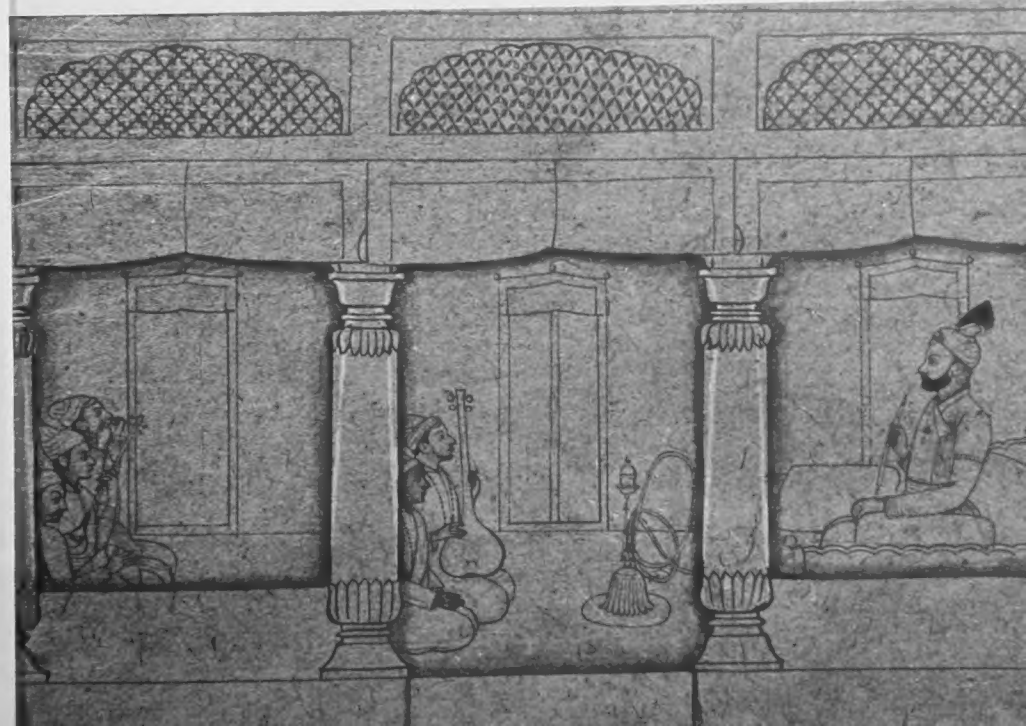
singer, or watching with total absorption the slow and measured steps of a lovely dancer, a peculiar stillness descends upon the scene. Music seems to hang in the air: a *khayal* now, a *tappa* another time, the suggestion of his insistent, almost obsessive, interest in a specific piece of music on occasions coming across not only visually, but in the unusual inscriptions on the paintings of Nainsukh. When Zafar Kanchani sings, *Kaun kharota dil jan mian faryad medi nahin lenda* ("Who is this darling prince that accepts not my entreaties?"), the occasion is enlivened by the *bol*-s being included in the inscription even on this quickly done drawing³. And even when we see Balwant Singh absorbed in writing a letter to his royal nephew, Amrit Pal of Basohli, in the month of Ashadh⁴, we learn that in those days the *tappa* which had taken possession of him was: *Pyara mainu disda nahin. Papi vey medi gal sun jain* ("The loved one I cannot see. O darling sinner! go only after hearing me"). A song is not very far from Balwant Singh's thoughts when he strikes a lion down from his elephant, for the inscription⁵ says that the *khayal* that "had taken hold of him" those days ran thus: *Tainu kin sikhleian naina dian chorian, Dilbar merea* ("Who taught you these captivating wiles of the eyes, my darling?"). And we reach out for the many meanings of the simple line, *Tori manohar ali ri ab na mano*, inscribed on the famous painting in which he listens to his singing girls and musicians at Jasrota⁶. From this magic world, it is not only Balwant Singh but his greatly gifted singers and dancers, Lad Bai, Zafar, Amal, who seem to step out with lithe grace.

Unfortunately we do not know as much from other sources of the place that music or dance—and at the royal courts they were almost inextricably mixed—occupied in the scheme of things. The records are extremely poor, and the extent to which music and dance entered the lives of the people in these parts can only be gleaned through occasional flashes of the kind provided by the unusual group of Balwant Singh pictures. The presence of singers and dancing girls at nearly every court can be taken for granted: what is missing is the documentary evidence which in any case is so scanty. The Kanchanis seem to have been everywhere, at the courts of the Panjab hills and the Panjab plains. Some of our information comes from European travellers who frequently kept notes of their travels and tell us of the ubiquitous presence of these 'creatures of gold' even at centres of pilgrimage like Jwalamukhi in the hills⁷. The celebrated account of the court of that distinguished patron of painting, Sansar Chand of Kangra, by Moorcroft⁸, includes a clear reference to the daily recitals at the court:

"At noon the Raja retires for two or three hours; after which he ordinarily plays at chess for some time, and the evening is devoted to singing and naching, in which the performers recite most commonly Brij Bhakha songs relating to Krishna".

The traveller George Forster records with some warmth 'the smiling alacrity' with which he received protection and comfort in the house of a

Raja Balwant Singh listening to music, circa 1750.



singing girl at the little town of Mankot in the hills when he was in a predicament.

"It would have made your heart glad to have seen this honest girl baking my bread and boiling my peas, she did it with so good a will; present service was but a small return for the many favours she had received from those of my class"⁹.

With the beginning of the nineteenth century, and the firm establishment of the court of the great Sikh Maharaja, Ranjit Singh, at Lahore, our information on music and dance in the Panjab becomes a little more substantial. As the century progressed from its opening years, and the glitter of the Sikh court increased even as its power did, we begin to move, as in the hill courts of the Panjab, only on a somewhat grander scale, into an atmosphere in which music and dance become important as arts. We hear of the Maharaja himself sitting down, evening after evening, to watch recitals by professional artistes attached to his court¹⁰. In the earlier years, we have an occasional notice of his retiring at night, after having disposed of the tumultuous business of the day, to listen to the playing of the flute by Attar Khan who is mentioned by name more than once even in the dry account of the daily events at the court. In the later years, however, the focus is on singers and dancers, frequently identified by name, who provided for him the relaxation he sought in the evening after the feverish activity of the day had ended. The atmosphere was generally of merry-making, the "market of pleasure and gaiety becoming brisk": there is much drinking, some ribaldry and, inevitably, 'the nautch'. But even in the midst of crowds and noise, it is possible to discern a genuine interest in the recitals. It is true that the 'nautch', a combination of singing and dancing at times by the same person and at others by different persons making up one performance, became a standard ingredient of state entertainment. There were the festive occasions such as Lohri, Basant, Dusshera, Diwali, and there were the visits of dignitaries, in particular 'the glorious Sahibs', who descended in such large numbers upon the Sikh court especially in the second half of the Maharaja's reign. In such a setting it is somewhat difficult to ascertain the quality of responses to performances, for they could easily have been there to provide some glamour, or the necessary background noise while social pleasantries went on on either side, but there are indications that the performances were frequently taken seriously and were of an unusually high order.

At any rate most of these were held in unbelievably lavish settings. Some idea of this is to be had from the remarkable account of the Maharaja's court, the *Umdat-ut-Tawarikh* of Sohan Lal Suri¹¹. Lala Sohan Lal captures with singular vividness the richness of the texture of the times, and it is in his pages, which are virtually a day-to-day account of what was happening at the Lahore court, that we are able to catch a breath of those times. We learn from him thus of the preparations on the occasion of the Maharaja's meeting with the Governor-General Lord William Bentinck, when a tent in which, as the evening progressed, music and dance were to be presented.



Singers at a court (Detail), circa 1790.

"The Maharaja ordered the Raja Kalan (Dhyan Singh) to decorate and adorn the place in the best possible way and to make arrangements for the illuminations and the fireworks. At first a huge and high camp was to be set up and inside the same one velvet tent without poles with well-wrought velvet *kanat-s* must be fixed up and under it a gold canopied *charpai* with three big gold-woven and brocade carpets with gold and silver edgings must be spread out and be placed under the wooden feet of the small stools and before the huge tent a flooring of *artash*, brocade, gold-woven, gold-threaded cloth and five *pashmina*, *atlas* and *kimkhab* tents must be set up. And one be-jewelled huge canopy was to be set up and silver and gold utensils were to be displayed and such a gathering should be arranged that the onlookers be amazed to see it."¹²

When it comes to the actual recitals, we even get the names of the singers and sometimes of the dancers, Muslim-sounding names like Dhanno, Nabbo, Kaulan, Khairan, Pahro. The first two had sung and danced for Captain Wade who was on such excellent terms with the Maharaja and a frequent visitor from across the Sutlej at his court¹³; Lala Sohan Lal himself gets somewhat carried away when he comes to describing the performances at the time of the meeting of the Maharaja with Lord William Bentinck:

"The *Nawab Sahib* (the Governor-General) put all these (gifts) before the Maharaja and, taking him by hand, led him to the camp where

the charming singers were producing music and they engaged themselves in enjoying the music and the dance by seating themselves in chairs. Rs. 1,000 were granted to them by the Maharaja and the clever singers made it clear in their most pleasant mood that they could make the audience like pictures on the wall by making them listen with one slowly developing, charming tune of theirs and could lay open the doors of happiness, success and pleasure. The dust of ill-will and tiresomeness and the rust of worry and anxiety got erased from the hearts of the world and its people with the eraser of excessive music. The combination of Jupiter and Venus took place in the zodiacal sign of Pisces and fruits of happiness were put forth in the garden of joy¹⁴.

Through Lala Sohan Lal we hear again of the singers and dancing girls of Kartarpur and Kapurthala, apart, of course, from the large contingent attached to the Maharaja's own court. On one occasion when the Maharaja was on a visit to the house of Sardar Nihal Singh Ahluwalia in his fort to congratulate him on the birth of a son, the said Sardar, we learn, "showed great respect and civility in welcoming the Maharaja", and had "very fine and wonderful floorings spread out inside very rich canopies and tents". Then:¹⁵

"The doors of happiness and success in the world were thrown open in his face and the happy resoundings of the sounds expressing his pleasure and success spread far and wide. The bride of the world took its blessed seat in the chair of everlasting happiness. The fairy-statured coquettish personalities made the stone hearts of the grief-ridden people melt like wax with a single feat of theirs. The tambourine took to winding up the ear of the broken-hearted and the flute provided all the material for opening one's heart without any hesitation. The sarangi got ready to create different shades of happiness and the drum announced opening of the doors of merriment".

The singer Kaulan seems to have been quite a sensation at Lahore and even became the cause of an incident in which Captain Wade and Ventura Sahib, who had apparently succumbed to her beauty, became involved, an incident that caused some embarrassment on both sides¹⁶. Perhaps it was she who sang "in a very delicate and low tone" the song with the burden, *Motian wala banna* (Hail, pearl-bedecked bridegroom) while welcoming 'the Nawab Sahib', the name by which the Governor-General was known this side of the Sutlej. The use by Lala Sohan Lal of phrases such as "David-like" for the music produced by the singing girls is probably an attempt on his part to parade his own learning; but he does make reference now and then to the music and dance of the English ladies who accompanied the Governors-General, Lord William Bentinck and Lord Auckland, on different occasions, even mentioning that the Maharaja took some interest in the music and dance of these "houries"¹⁷. But, for the Maharaja, who was seemingly greatly attached to some of his singers and dancers, true pleasure came only when he called upon one of them to give a recital. On one occasion he took special care to speak, in laudatory terms, to Lord Auckland of the great talent of

Khairan who had apparently given a splendid performance of her 'peacock dance' at Ropar in 1831. On another, he himself issued orders that for a performance before his honoured guests only those dancing girls "who were specially good in singing" be asked¹⁸.

The rewards that were bestowed upon performers were truly generous, for the Maharaja, who at a rather late stage of his life even married a dancing girl, Gul Begum, seems to have been partial to them as a class. The munificence with which British dignitaries visiting the Maharaja's court showed their appreciation of the performances need not be taken as a true index of the skill of the singers and the dancers—for it can be seen more as an accepted act of courtesy and courtliness so necessary in that setting—and yet it is difficult to escape the feeling that what was being patronized at the royal court of the Panjab was art of an altogether superior order.

The responses of several of the Europeans, who flitted in and out of the Panjab in the Maharaja's time, to Hindustani music and dance were often far from enthusiastic; it is, in fact, a note of relief that one senses in a statement like: "this evening there was no naching at the court". But this, again, is no clue to the talent of the performers. The beauty of the singers and dancers is frequently commented upon, but the seeming endlessness of recitals appears to have been too much for many of these visitors. In European accounts, one looks almost in vain for a sensitive appreciation of what was being offered to them. The accounts are bare and generally 'superior' in their tone when it comes to describing recitals of Indian music and dance. It is for this reason that Baron Hugel's delightful note on these performers merits special attention. It is in his *Travels in Kashmir and the Panjab* that he turns unexpectedly to the subject¹⁹:

"I have not yet said much about these Indian dancing girls. Lahor is the only place where they seem to have any beauty, and where the lavish profusion consequent upon the residence of a court causes their art to be more valued and better paid for. They are not, as sometimes happens in Calcutta, stolen children or slaves; but the daughters of near relatives of dancers, and their education for their profession usually begins at five years old, and requires an apprenticeship of nine years to perfect them in the song and dance. Although this twofold art is not in accordance with European tastes, there is certainly a clearness in the voice, and a precision in the step, which surprises, where it does not please, and there is in the Nach of Lahor something peculiarly striking. The women of the Panjab are renowned throughout India for the singular whiteness of their teeth, which are perfect both in form and regularity. This gives a great charm to the countenance and they are generally finely formed, with beautiful hands and feet, though their dress does not display their figure to advantage. Their dress consists of coloured silk trousers, fitting tight below, and fastened round the waist by a band and tassels which hang as low as the knee. Over this falls a tunic of white muslin, reaching only half way down the leg, and a shawl is thrown over the figure in coming and going away. Such, in short, is their house costume. When dancing, they

put on a very wide garment of various colours, mingled with gold, which covers them from the shoulders to the ankles. According to our European ideas, the dancers from Kashmir were the prettiest, with their fair and florid complexions, and their symmetrical forms peculiar to the people of that land. The others were darker skinned, but in regularity and beauty of features they far surpassed the Kashmirians. One of them we called Heloise, on account of the enthusiastic expression of her countenance; and she and her aunt had ornaments on them worth from 10,000 to 12,000 rupees; their clothes were sumptuous in proportion, and over them was thrown a Kashmir shawl valued at 1,000 rupees more. To destroy the charm of all this, I must add, that there was not a sufficient attention to cleanliness manifested to render a nearer examination of their finery at all desirable. A dancer called Kaira²⁰, the same whose beauty had caused her to be chosen as a performer on the occasion of the Maharaja's interview with Lord William Bentinck, had really a beautiful voice: she sang and danced with most expressive grace, carriage, and sweetness of voice. When one has got over the strangeness of the combination, there is a certain charm in this manner of singing poetry. I shall not soon forget the expression with which the girl sang the words:

*Thou art my soul: thou art my world.
I who please thee here am thy slave.*

Throwing herself at the same time at the listener's feet, her features lighted up as though beseeching for a hearing and her hands clasping his knee, then abruptly starting up with the exclamation:

*But thou art silent: thy heart is of stone.
It is cold for me; it will never be mine.*

She moved away, her hand raised and her head thrown back; while she threw an expression of despair into the last line, and seemed to sob out the words. The continued movements of the musicians are also in character with the rest of the performance, which begins with the amatory songs, the dancer standing at the far end of the room, having the musicians behind her. She presently steps forward, the soft slow music becomes louder and quicker, as the expression becomes more impassioned; the dancer, describing either hope or fear, moves rapidly from side to side, and the whole usually concludes with an imitation of despair. Their epic poems are always sung seated, and the motion of the dancers is indicative of the vivacity of the narrative. The only songs, which require dancing as a part of them, are those of a jocular character, where the joke borders on the verge of impropriety without overstepping it. It is but very seldom that these dancers have the talent of Kaira; in general, they are, on the contrary, very stupid, and do not properly suit the action to the word, or else act like puppets set on motion by clockwork. Their greatest beauty is the delicacy of their feet and hands, which seem quite peculiar to themselves, and the freedom and grace of their action are inimitable".

One reaches the end of this passage wishing that an equally detailed notice of a performer had been left behind by an Indian writing with greater understanding of what he saw and heard. But there is not much else that is apt to turn up by way of evidence. There are no detailed references, nothing that speaks to one of the strength of the tradition, of continuity or of change, of what was actually happening in these fields. It is only a feeling that lingers, the feeling that there, in the Panjab, these arts were alive and well upto the middle of the nineteenth century when everything came tumbling down with the annexation of these parts to the domains of the Company Bahadur.

NOTES

* By 'the Panjab' here is meant the broad region covering both the plains of the Panjab and the numerous Rajput hill states of the 'Pahari' area in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

1. Among the most significant of the patrons of Pahari painting, Balwant Singh (?1721-?1763) has been the subject of much deserved attention from art historians, even if there is now considerable dispute as to whether he came from the ruling house of Jammu or of Jasrota. On him, see Karl Khandalavala, "Balwant Singh of Jammu—a patron of Pahari painting", *Bulletin of the Prince of Wales Museum*, No. 2; W. G. Archer, *Indian Paintings from the Panjab Hills* (Southaby, Parks Bernet, London, 1973); B. N. Goswamy, "The Problem of the Artist Nainsukh of Jasrota", *Artibus Asiae*, 1966, Vol. XXVIII.
2. Nainsukh, son of Pandit Seu and younger brother of Manaku, is among the best known and most celebrated of Pahari painters. For more information on him, see B. N. Goswamy, "Pahari Painting: The Family as the Basis of Style," *Marg*, Vol. XXI, No. 4. Many of his works are illustrated in W. G. Archer, *op. cit.*, under 'Jammu'.
3. This sketch is in the Chandigarh Museum. The inscription on it also lists the names of the accompanying musicians. For a fuller discussion, see Archer, Vol. I, p. 208 and Vol. II, No. 55 under 'Jammu'.
4. This painting is in the Prince of Wales Museum, Bombay. The long inscription in Takri above the painting refers not only to the Raja but gives the date and the month in which it was painted while also mentioning that in these days the *neem* trees were in fruition. See Archer, Vol. I, p. 106; Vol. II, No. 51 under 'Jammu'.
5. The Takri inscription uses the words: "*tihne dine ehe khial basee da tha*" to indicate the obsessive concern of the Raja with this verse. The painting is in the Fogg Art Museum, Cambridge.
6. For a discussion of the many interpretations of this line of verse, see Archer, Vol. I, pp. 198-99. The inscription on this painting, which is in the Lahore Museum, was much misunderstood when it was first read.
7. Thus, Baron Charles Hugel, *Travels in Kashmir and the Panjab* (Reprint, Patiala, 1970), p. 45:
'Female dancers are very numerous about the temple of Jwalamukhi, and they are rather fairer and prettier than usual. More than twenty, decked out with lilies, made their appearance before my tent in the afternoon....'
Casual references to singers and dancers are found in numerous European accounts such as those of Lt. Barr, Leopold von Orlich, V. Jacquemount, W. G. Osborne, M. Hanigberger.
8. William Moorcroft and George Trebeck, *Travels in the Himalayan Provinces of Hindustan and the Panjab & C* (Reprint, N. Delhi, 1971). Vol. I, p. 144. Moorcroft was at Sansar Chand's court in Alampur in June-July, 1820.

9. George Forster, *A Journey from Bengal to England & C* (Reprint, Patiala, 1970), Vol. I, pp. 275-76. Forster was in the Panjab Hills in 1783.
10. In the newsletters of the years 1810-1817, published by H.L.O. Garrett and G. L. Chopra (eds.), in *Events at the Court of Ranjit Singh* (Reprint, Patiala, 1970), a familiar sentence occurs: "When the night had passed one quarter, the dancing girls were called in. . . ."
11. *Umdat-ut-Tawarikh*, Vol. III, Trans. and Ed. by V. S. Suri, Delhi, 1961. This remarkable account runs into five *daftar*-s or volumes, only two of which, Nos. III & IV, have so far been published.
12. *Umdat-ut-Tawarikh*, Vol. III, pp. 97-98.
13. Capt., later Colonel, C. M. Wade was stationed at Ludhiana and appears to have been on the best of terms with the Maharaja who referred to him often as "the ornament of wisdom".
14. *Umdat-ut-Tawarikh*, Vol. III, p. 88.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 141.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 322. Lala Sohan Lal rather deliberately slurs over the details of this incident.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 438. "Next the glorious sahibs arranged for a jovial gathering in which (English) women performed a dance in such a manner that even the houries of the heaven would feel their heart sunk at their sight".
18. *Umdat-ut-Tawarikh*, Vol. III, p. 565.
19. Hugel, *op. cit.*, pp. 344-46. The song to which the Baron refers sounded, in the editor's words, much better in its original German:

Du bist meine Seele,
 Du bist meine Welt;
 Ich bin Deine Sklavin,
 Die hier sich gefällt".

Allein Du schweigst,
 Dein herz ist von stein,
 Für mich ist es kalt,
 Ach nie werd ich Dein!
20. This must be Khairan who is also referred to by Lala Sohan Lal several times.
21. It is more than likely that the 'epic poem' of the Baron's description is nothing else but a *raga*, fully developed by the singer.

Computer Recognition and Transliteration of Mridangam Mnemonics

Gift Siromoney, M. Chandrasekaran and R. Chandrasekaran

INTRODUCTION

Even though computers are basically counting devices, they can also perform many sophisticated operations. Today the computer is used as a tool in many disciplines and music is no exception. During the last two decades the computer has been applied to music in many different ways. Firstly, computer-assisted musical compositions have been produced. Secondly, the computer has been used to analyse musical compositions. Thirdly, the computer has been used for musical information retrieval; fourthly, for sound analysis and synthesis, and finally for recognition of musical scores.

Computer-assisted Musical Compositions

Computer-assisted musical compositions were experimented with about twenty years ago in the United States of America and a little later in Europe when computers became accessible to music researchers and composers. Western music composers have been experimenting with non-traditional music even before the advent of the computer, and computer-produced compositions could thus win acceptance without too much opposition.

The main principle used in such compositions was to analyse at first a certain body of music and extract from it the different proportions of the musical notes and other related statistics. Using detailed statistical information, new compositions were made reflecting certain characteristics of the original body of music. A fine balance had to be maintained between too much and too little adherence to the original body of music.

Application of such principles to Karnatic music had been presented in 1976 to the Music Academy, Madras, and the Computer Society of India by K. R. Ananthanarayanan.

The Computer for Musical Analysis

The computer has opened up new possibilities of analysing musical compositions exploiting the vast data-processing potentialities offered by the computer. It is now possible to compare in detail the style of different composers and to quantify them and with the availability of computers in Madras the scope for such work has widened.

Musical Information Retrieval

The computer has been found quite useful in the general area of information retrieval and musical information retrieval is part of the general problem. First, it can relate to the different musical compositions. If all the known works are stored in a computer with details such as the *raga*, *tala* and the name of the composer, then catalogues can be produced in terms of the *raga*, *tala* and the composer, all arranged in alphabetical order. Such programmes are common with reference to library books. Musical information retrieval methods have been applied to Karnatic music compositions and such applications were experimented with in the U.S.A.

Another kind of application in this area would be to store musical compositions in some standard form and compare the works of different composers for common phrases. This could also establish unsuspected borrowing between composers.

Along with the developments in computers, electronic sound equipment has also been developing at a rapid rate. The musical characteristics of musical instruments and vocal singing have been analysed and attempts have been made to synthesise musical sounds to produce required tones. Such a development has made the electronic organ possible. Attempts have been made to use a computer to analyse patterns of sound waves and to simulate the characteristics of different Karnatic instruments. Given a particular melody and the physical parameters of any given musical instrument, the experiment would reproduce the melody with the characteristics of the desired instrument. Such experiments were conducted at the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research, Bombay.

Computer Recognition of Musical Scores

Musical researchers wishing to use computers normally convert the musical notation into some form suitable for punching on to computer cards. In recent years attempts have been made to write programmes that will make the computer recognize the musical scores directly after digitization. Western music notation engraved and printed can be successfully recognized and converted and stored in an alphanumeric form called Ford-Columbia music notation.

* * *

ABSTRACT

Mridangam is a harmonic drum used in classical Indian music and a variety of tones can be produced from a single instrument. In order to remember many complicated rhythm patterns a well-developed system of mnemonics is used by a drummer. It is shown that mridangam mnemonics printed in Tamil can be recognized by computer methods. Each letter, once it is recognized, is first represented by a numeral and then transliterated into the corresponding Roman letters. This is treated as a problem in the area of computer pattern recognition. The method used for recognition of mridangam mnemonics is an adaptation of a method recently developed by the authors for the recognition of all Tamil characters.

* * *

Modern composers of western music and music researchers are now making use of the wide range of possibilities offered by the computer in experimental music composition and research.¹ The computer can be effectively used in stylistic analysis and in other direct statistical applications.² There is a major area of research in the field of pattern recognition which is now being applied to the recognition of musical notation. Prerau has developed a method of computer recognition of standard engraved western musical notation.³ In this paper we demonstrate a method of recognition of mridangam mnemonics printed in Tamil characters in a standard type.

The mridangam or matthalam is one of the most ancient of the musical drums of India.⁴ It is a barrel-shaped drum about 60 cm long with a girth of about 90 cm in the center. The ends have a diameter ranging from about 15 to 25 cm and the left end is a little larger than the right.⁵ The shell is now made of wood. A recently discovered ancient Tamil work called *Pancha Marabu*,⁶ prescribes, in its prose commentary, Neem wood or clay for the shell of the matthalam. It also gives the dimensions of the instrument. The two heads of the instrument are covered with parchment strained by six-

teen leather braces interlaced and passing through the length of the instrument. The right head of the instrument is often tuned to the tonic and the left head to the fifth.

Both the right and left heads of the instrument are made up of three layers. Only one layer represents a complete head and the other layers are partially cut away to form rings. The right head is loaded at the center by applying a black mixture made from iron slag. The left head also has a central load but unlike the load for the right side, it has to be prepared afresh each time the drum is used and a paste made of coarse wheat flour is used.

Different tone qualities are obtained from the instrument⁷ by striking with the full hand, or the several fingers at different places and by dampening or releasing. Books on mridangam playing recognize seven major 'sound words' and four minor 'sound words'.⁸ The first four sound words or mnemonics taught to mridangam players today are *tha*, *thi*, *thom* and *nam*. The tradition of representing the different tones of the instrument by sound words is very old. *Pancha Marabu*, already referred to in this paper, has a small section on the subject entitled *ezhuthu marabu*. The sound words mentioned in that work are *tha*, *thi*, *tho*, *ta* in the section under drums and *tha*, *thi*, *thu*, *tho*, *ki* in the section on dance.⁹ The method of forming compound words are also given. Letters that form the sound words are referred to as *vaachiya ezhuthu* (instrument letters) or *vaachiyam* for short.

Text books are available in Tamil^{10,11} that present mridangam sound words for the different *tala*-s or time-measures. If one wishes to analyse any sample of mridangam words with the aid of a computer, the normal procedure will be to code the different sound words and transfer the data on to punch cards and feed the cards with a suitable program into a computer. Here a punch operator who knows the Tamil letters recognizes each letter for coding. However we address ourselves to a different problem. Can the Tamil letters that form the sound words be treated as different patterns in black and white and be recognized as different letters by a computer? It is this pattern recognition problem to which we address ourselves. Treating the engraved printed music in staff notation as patterns, it has been possible to recognize the different notes by a computer. Similarly we wish to demonstrate a method that can recognize the mridangam words printed in *Bharathi Antique* type.

In pattern recognition work, the required patterns will be converted into binary pictures of tiny black and white dots and the patterns stored in the computer as binary matrices. Such digitization is normally done by special equipment. However we have performed the digitization manually. We have already worked out a method of automatic recognition of printed Tamil characters.¹² In this problem we have to reckon with a few additional features not met with in the recognition of Tamil characters.

A horizontal bar is often marked above a line of sound words to indicate that the tempo of playing should be doubled. A double bar above the line indicates that the instrument should be played four times the speed

of mridangam words represented without any marking. This is similar to the system of representing musical notes in Karnatic music. However the double line above a mridangam sound word is rarely met with.

A dot after a sound word represents a silent pause or rest of one unit. A series of dots below a line indicates that the sound word *thom* should also be played simultaneously. A line under a sound word indicates that the sound word *tha* should be played simultaneously.

Lengthening of vowels in a sound word indicates the increase of the duration of a stroke. For instance if the word *tha* has a duration of one unit then the word *thaa* would indicate a duration of two units.

In our recent work on the recognition of Tamil characters we had not made provision for Grantha letters such as *ja* which occur in mridangam mnemonics. We provide in this method for the letter *ja* as well as its combinations with vowels. A vertical line is used to denote the end of a phrase called *arai avardhanam* and a double vertical line to denote the ending of a full phrase called *avardhanam*. In our program we have made provision for the computer recognition of the vertical line. We also provide for the recognition of the horizontal bar below and above the lines. The dot which occurs between and below the letters is also taken care of. If the input text contains a symbol that cannot be recognized by the program then an asterisk mark will be printed in the place of the unrecognized symbol. Once the symbols are recognized by the computer, the result is printed in Roman letters. Figure 1 gives a sample of input mridangam mnemonics and the corresponding computer output. Table 1 gives a result of Tamil characters that occur in the mridangam words and the corresponding Roman equivalents. There are three *n*-s in Tamil and for the sake of simplification they are all printed as *N*. Table 2 gives the important sound words and the computer transliteration in Roman letters and the conventional text book representation in Roman letters.

For recognizing the different patterns, we use the method of 'symbolic runs' already developed by us. The method is relatively simple and we shall describe it informally as follows. First each character to be recognized is converted into a rectangular binary matrix in which a '1' represents a black, and a '0' a blank or white. Information is extracted from each array and stored in the memory. Letters and symbols that are likely to occur in the text are stored in the computer as string patterns. Each pattern is represented by a numeral inside the computer. The sample that is fed into the computer is read character by character. Each character that is read, is first tested as to whether it has a horizontal line above it. If such a line exists, it is recognized and removed. The rest of the picture is reduced to a string pattern using a special method described later, and compared with the original characters already stored. If there is agreement with any of the original characters the pattern is recognized as that character. A similar procedure is followed for the dot below a letter. The occurrences of symbols that represent the medial *s* (long) and medial *o* are taken note of and the combination of the characters recognized as a vowel following a consonant.

The method of converting a binary matrix pattern into a string pattern can be described informally as follows. Each binary matrix is examined by the computer column by column and the number of runs of 1's is noted. These values form a string of numerals and any one numeral may occur in consecutive positions forming a short, medium or long runs. This information is noted and a new string called symbolic run is formed. Similarly another symbolic run string is formed after a row-wise examination of the picture matrix. These two strings together form the string that represents the given picture matrix representing a Tamil character. The different symbols that are used in mridangam mnemonics have unique representations.

This method can be extended to recognize printed Karnatic music in Tamil characters. The output of these programs can be used as input to music analysis programs and music-playing programs.¹³

The program was written in FORTRAN IV and was executed on an IBM 370/155 computer at the Indian Institute of Technology, Madras.

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V. 122.

தத்தித்தோ டெவ்வென்று சத்தம் பிறக்குமென
முத்தமிழோ ரெல்லா மொழிந்தார்கள் - எத்திறமும்
தன்வழி யொன்றித் தனித்தனியே வாடிவாம்
பின்னு மடைசொல்லாம் பேசு.

V. 145.

தவ்வென்றும் திவ்வென்றும் துவ்வென்றும் தொவ்வென்றும்
மவ்வென்றும் தோழி யாயுங்காற் - கவ்வென்ற
வொற்றே டுகுத் தொடுங்கி யியங்கியதோம்
மற்றும் தொடுத்து வரும்.

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* * *

INPUT

நம். தின். நம். கிடதக

நம் தொம். தின். நம். கிடதக

OUTPUT

NAM. THIN. NAM. KITATHAKA

NAMTHOM. THIN. NAM. KITATHAKA

Fig. 1. A sample input of mridangam mnemonics and the computer output in Roman letters.

TABLE 1
List of Tamil symbols and the Roman equivalents

Tamil	Roman	Tamil	Roman
ங்	NG	ஜ	JA
ன்	N	சா	CHAA
த்	TH	தா	THAA
ம்	M	ளா	LAA
ன்	N	கி	KI
ஜ்	J	தி	THI
க	KA	மி	MI
ச	CHA	ரி	RI
ட	TA	தீ	THII
ன	NA	கு	KU
த	THA	டு	TU
ந	NA	தொ	THO
ள	LA	நொ	NO
ன	NA	ஜொ	JO

TABLE 2
Mridangam mnemonics and their Roman representations

Tamil	Conventional representation	Computer transliteration
த	THA	THA
தி	THI	THI
தொம்	THOM	THOM
நம்	NOM	NAM
ட	TA	TA
ச	CHA	CHA
தின்	DHIN	THIN
கி	KI	KI
க	KA	KA
ளாம்	LONG	LAANG
தாம்	THAM	THAAM

The Performing Musician in a Changing Society*

J. H. Kwabena Nketia

When one looks at the musical scene in Africa today, one cannot but be struck by its complexity, which is a result of the diversity of forms and usages associated with different ethnic groups. These constitute the heritage from the past that survives in the present. Added to this is the presence of non-traditional music which dominates the musical life of urban areas and which seems to be gradually extending its provenance because of changes in outlook caused by the mass media and various agencies of social change.

If these two groups of musical traditions, which exist side by side, did not overlap in any way in respect of their contexts of use and performers, one could confine one's observations on the theme of this congress, *The Performing Musician in Contemporary Music Culture*, to performers of non-traditional music. For colonial Africa and the first few years of independence, this would be legitimate. For in that era new music was strictly music for new institutions, while traditional music was linked with traditional institutions. Although this has continued to be the general rule, a conscious effort is now being made everywhere in Africa to programme traditional music for broadcasting and television, to provide outlets for traditional musicians in contemporary society by bringing them to perform in theatres, sports arenas, hotels and other public places as well as at trade fairs and state ceremonies, thus creating new problems for traditional performers in the process of making traditional music more accessible to those cut off from it.

As this exposure of contemporary society to traditional music is intended to make traditional music an integral part of contemporary musical culture, it would seem unrealistic in the African situation to limit our observations on contemporary musical culture to non-traditional music and musicians when national cultural policies are giving contemporary relevance to the heritage of the past. Moreover it seems that our understanding of the present role and problems of the performing musician could be enhanced if the continuities and discontinuities that characterise his way of life were examined by contrasting the performer in traditional society with the performer in contemporary society.

I propose, therefore, to give another perspective to our general theme: first, by taking the term contemporary music in its literal sense and not in its special sense of a specific music idiom originating from the west and cultivated largely by western musicians and their Third World associates; and second, by considering the performing musician in the contemporary

musical cultures of Africa against the backdrop of social change. In a nutshell, my variant of the theme will be the performing musician in a changing society, for in African societies, where music is practised as an integral part of social life, a musical culture cannot be considered in isolation from the society that cultivates it, since musical change is often a reflection of social change. Contemporary musical culture exists only where a contemporary society that supports particular musical expressions has emerged. By contemporary society, I mean a society in which linkages other than those of ethnicity, kinship and other forms of affiliation based on traditional beliefs and activities are primary, a society in which the performing musician and his public share new aspirations, new modes of expression or a new basis of social life.

In the colonial period, contemporary society was one that rejected African values outright and sought to become assimilated as much as possible to western values. In post-independent Africa, contemporary society is becoming more and more the kind of society that sees its cultural identity in terms of the African heritage it rejected in the colonial past, but which does not shut itself off from external influences. Hence contemporary culture aims at re-creating its traditions in terms of an ideology that gives the African past pride of place, an ideology that respects the expertise of traditional men of culture, including musicians, but which at the same time accommodates external forms of knowledge and skills as well as sources of influence that lead to creative innovations compatible with its aspirations.

In such an ideological context, the contemporary African musician may be judged not only in terms of his technical skills, artistry and repertoire but also in terms of the contribution he makes to traditionalism and consequently to the assertion of cultural identity through music. He may also be viewed in terms of his innovative use of traditional African materials in a contemporary idiom or even a transplanted popular musical idiom. Newspaper critics of African pop musicians, for example, seem to be always on the look-out for such features. Africanisation of external cultural resources is a contemporary trend and a goal in Africa today, for one of our problems in independent Africa is what to do with the western culture we have inherited from the colonial past and the ideas and influences that come to us continually through the media and culture contact.

The value of the musician is, of course, not seen only in relation to his involvement in cultural processes, or his merit as an exponent of culture. In traditional society, he is regarded as a specialist in his own right, that is as someone with more than average command of skills and knowledge of repertoire and one who provides a particular service to his community. This view of the musician is irrespective of whether he organises his mode of life as a professional musician, living partly or entirely on his art, or as a musician who offers his services voluntarily to his community, but who sustains himself through other means of gainful employment.

The emphasis on service is widespread in traditional society where the social arrangement attaches musicians to institutions or social groups,

* This paper was read at the Congress of the International Music Council held in October, 1977 in Prague. The general theme discussed at the Congress was *The Performing Musician in Contemporary Music Culture*.

and where the position of a musician may not only be achieved but ascribed. In some societies one comes across families of drummers, xylophone players, cora players, one-stringed fiddle players not only because the family continues to be the basic educational unit, but also because this is part of the social arrangement by which certain services and roles in the community are distributed.

Whatever his status, the performing musician is regarded a person whose role in the community is vital for the expression of consciousness and well-being, for a community that has no musical life is described as 'dead'. That is why his services are not only appreciated but rewarded irrespective of the status he actually occupies in society.

The potential of his art for other purposes is also recognised in traditional society, for he can use his music as an avenue for praise or blame, for social criticism and commentary, for inciting people, or for sheer propaganda. While he is given considerable license, he is also subject to a certain amount of social control, particularly in regard to the situations in which he may perform and his choice of repertoire.

As is to be expected, in contemporary society, the position of the performing musician tends to be somewhat ambivalent, leaning in certain respects towards the traditional and in others towards western values. The services of the musician are increasingly being commercialised, giving rise to new forms of professionalism, and consequently shifts in patronage as well as the rise of a new breed of managers and promoters who do not exist in traditional society. In place of the traditional type of institutional attachment, contemporary performing groups now seek affiliation with governmental and private organisations, including arts councils, political organisations, hotels, night clubs, recording studios or recording companies, and churches.

The categories of performing musicians in contemporary society are now a little more diversified and includes those who perform in both traditional and contemporary society, and those who perform only in contemporary institutions and new social contexts. The latter includes those who perform traditional music and 'folklore' to urban audiences in theatres, concert halls and other places of entertainment. Such performances take place not so much as tourist attractions as part of the national theatre movement or as an aspect of cultural revival. There are also musicians who specialise in African forms of popular music, and many of them develop and maintain themselves as professionals. In some countries one would also find a small group of musicians who cultivate some kind of new music which finds ready audiences in churches and educational institutions.

Like traditional musicians, contemporary musicians are conscious of their obligation to their society, and more especially of their contribution to musical life. They respond just as much to the need for social criticism and commentary, and may be as topical, responsive to the ideologies of the moment, except that they are apt to yield to the need for propaganda as a means of achieving popularity and enhancing their commercial viability.

As many musicians in traditional and contemporary society practise their music largely by oral tradition, performing roles and procedures tend to be fairly well-defined. Some of them perform as solo musicians, often with the support of one or two others who play minor parts, while others perform in small bands on their own or in combination with a chorus.

In group performances, musical roles are distributed on the basis of individual specialisation or level of competence in playing the complex parts of lead roles, for a musical performance is often the realisation of the given parts of a piece (known to the musicians) which are combined in definite ways, the re-creation of known repertoire, or spontaneous creation based on stock expressions. It involves the interplay of memory, creative imagination, skills, knowledge and awareness of the 'reference' system of the tradition. There are definite techniques of group music-making which are passed on orally or learned through observation and participation.

Because there is differential participation, leadership roles are established in both traditional and contemporary societies, but along slightly different lines. In contemporary society the leader of a group may combine the role of a star performer on a particular instrument, or the role of principal vocalist with organisational leadership. He may be responsible for some of the compositions for which the band is known. He may teach members of his band where necessary or arrange for someone to coach them. Traditional groups who perform in both traditional and contemporary contexts follow this model which is very close to the practice in traditional society.

In the case of folklore and concert groups who perform in contemporary society, leadership may be provided by someone who directs a group but who may not necessarily perform a star role in addition to directing. The musical director or conductor and the choreographer are western importations which are becoming established in the contemporary cultural scene as national theatre movements inspire the formation of music and dance ensembles. An important dimension in the quality of African performances is often lost in the presentations of such groups. Performing musicians who are directed by someone and those who are their own interpreters have different relationships to their music and their audiences.

In traditional society musical leadership may be sharply differentiated from organisational leadership. The latter kind of leader may or may not be an active performer or a person who plays an important musical role. Those who assume musical leadership however always assume important roles as cantor or as leading instrumentalist. The latter invariably plays the most complex parts in a musical performance and is regarded as a master musician. Often he plays his part in full knowledge of the other parts, and helps other players when necessary.

The task of a lead performer—whether cantor or instrumentalist—is not merely to reproduce what he knows, but to present it creatively, to develop its communicative potential through the limited improvisations or variations that he introduces or through the verbal texts he creates. His rela-

tionship to the music he performs is, therefore, a very direct one, for as a creative performer, he does not just interpret the musical ideas of others but uses the piece—the composition—as a medium for projecting his own ideas and feelings, or his response to the context or environment in which he performs, as well as the sentiments of individuals, the community or those of the divinities with which men interact. It is from such performing musicians that others learn the art either through observation during performance or personal instruction or guidance given informally when this is requested.

In general, the performing musician acquires his training in traditional society informally even where he undergoes a period of attachment to such a master musician; for in traditional society learning to perform is not merely a matter of acquiring technical competence. It is also a matter of developing attitudes and learning the body of traditions in terms of which music is made and interpreted.

These attitudes include not only those which encourage the performing musician to strive towards certain artistic ideals and observe certain norms but also psychological attitudes required by the music in which he specialises, religious attitudes to the musical medium—to particular musical instruments—social attitudes that determine the basis of interaction through music or the fraternity that is desired among performers of a particular class of instrumentalists whose relationships are established through a putative human or divine ancestor.

It is essentially these attitudes and the focus of the learning experience that differentiate traditional musicians from contemporary musicians. The latter tend to be more secular and commercially oriented, for social change is leading to the progressive secularisation of certain traditional institutions, to the breakdown of certain traditional beliefs as well as certain types of relationships. Whereas performers in traditional society share linkages which are sufficient to foster co-operation without the intervention of other agencies, linkages established through putative ancestors, divinities, kinship affiliation and so forth, contemporary musicians have to be brought together through the formation of associations and unions. Because these forms of association and unions are new and non-traditional, musicians' unions have had a chequered life in many African societies.

The constraint of time does not permit us to deal with other aspects of our theme in relation to the situation in Africa in this presentation, or even to elaborate on some of the points I have raised. Some continuities between the traditional and the contemporary are certainly discernible because of the common environment in which they operate and the deliberate attempts that are being made to make tradition meaningful in a situation of social change. But there are also a number of areas in which they are more or less differentiated. These are evident not only in the musical idioms which are practised but also in the social basis of the two musical cultures, the roles of the performing musicians in both contexts, their attitudes to their music and their audiences, their life styles and their responses to external influences.

Traditional musicians, on the whole, have a greater sense of purpose, greater dedication to their art, and a deeper understanding of its meaning in relation to the life of the individual and the community. This is why they continue to be effective in their societies even though they are much worse off economically than many of their contemporary counterparts. For them, the life of a musician is, first and foremost, a life of service—service to music, service to individuals and groups who need it, and service to the community. These are ideals that commercially oriented contemporary musicians need to develop as well since a greater sense of purpose and direction in their art will enable them to express their cultural identity.

In terms of opportunities, however, it seems that the contemporary musician has more of these than his traditional counterpart. His institutional ties are freer. He is much less subject to social control and has the freedom to choose any line he wishes to cultivate or develop that would still relate him closely to his audiences. What he lacks sometimes is the intensity of the traditional musician, his breadth of knowledge of his culture and the full acceptance by traditional society that the traditional musician enjoys.

It would seem, therefore, that the contemporary musician needs more attention than he has so far been given by those responsible for cultural development in Africa. This is not only because he needs, among other things, protection from exploitation by commercial houses but also because so much of the future of African music depends on the interest he takes in traditional music and his willingness to relate himself and his audience to it.

There has been a tendency for those concerned with the future of music in Africa to view social change with alarm and consequently to think only of ways of preserving, promoting and presenting traditional music. The time has come for those responsible for cultural development to face the challenge of social change realistically by exploring and reinforcing the present trend towards tradition evident among contemporary musicians so that the musical gap between traditional and contemporary societies in Africa may ultimately be bridged.



Obituaries

Charles Chaplin (1889-1977)

"The news of my death has killed me", says Napoleon at the end of a film planned but never executed by Chaplin. Chaplin is dead. I hope that we will not bury him with praise.

In the art of Chaplin, things and events are supposed to be what they are, in their brute state, without the trappings of ideology and interpretation. Each event is complete in itself. Each thing assumes a monstrous autonomy. He takes up the flag by accident, not to protest, but the flag takes him to prison. The machines of modern times and the storm-troopers of the great dictator turn as blindly 'berserk' as the painful formality of language, gesture, habit, the civilisation of their agents.

To counter the autonomy of objects and events, Chaplin could only give them a higher autonomy, a total multiplicity of meaning and function. Gesture and imagination become one, affirming an absolute freedom. Deprivation and loneliness express themselves in the dance of the bread-rolls, shoes-strings turn into spaghetti and a bank-safe is used to deposit a broom. The precise and simplified gesture of the tramp compels us to an undecorated reality while the 'real' world around him suffocates itself with a social and psychological illusion of its own making. The more one meets the other, the greater the 'chaos' that emerges. Chaplin rejects uniform stylisation as he rejects uniform reality. Both arise from the need to dominate and from a compulsion to hide the truth. From oneself, to begin with. From the other, as intention. Finally, it turns upon itself, snapping the dynamic tension which gave rise to the artiste's disguised subterfuge. Chaplin does not allow mistaking him for his disguise, as stylised or realistic illusion. He constantly indicates reality and does not seek to replace it.

Can one, having taken a moral and social view so insistently, show things as they are? Or does one inevitably get trapped, however "original" the system one operates with, by a self-constructed grid? What distinguishes Chaplin from lesser artistes like Keaton is precisely that he could dismantle his grid, as effortlessly as he revealed it. Keaton had the precious purity of a culminating tradition. Chaplin extends his healthy irreverence to himself. There is far more that is sacred to him fundamentally than aesthetic perfection. The speech of the barber turned dictator can embarrass us only if we forget the historical context. His gauche metaphor of workers, herded together, into the factory, as sheep, may have been impelled by the same urgency. The untruthful archaism was nowhere as true and poignant as the compulsive co-ordination of his wrists and eyes by the assembly line. He could dare to disregard his own assembly line of events and gestures because of this directness and immediacy.

He is perhaps the world's first great artiste to rebuke man's desire for immortality. The classical arts were founded upon this desire. The contemporary artist, watching men frightened into servility by his own creations, wishes the audience to destroy them immediately after use. For fear that the individuated life of his art, instead of being cremated after its death, should be used as an instrument to deaden others by example!

Chaplin had accused Hitler of stealing his butterfly moustache. Imagine what Gandhi, Marx and Einstein could accuse us of! Perhaps, after all, this new search to be mortal is futile. Chaplin is dead.

—KUMAR SHAHANI

Ustad Karamatulla Khan (1915-1977)

Ustad Karamatulla Khan, one of our finest tabla players, died in Calcutta on the morning of December 3, 1977 after a long illness. He was 62.

Khan Saheb was associated with All India Radio, Calcutta, since its inception. In fact, his association with broadcasting started in 1927 with the creation of the Indian Broadcasting Company's Calcutta Station. Because of this connection, his performances outside Bengal were not too frequent, though he missed few major 'Conferences' of India in the last forty years.

Karamatulla Khan belonged to the Faridabad Gharana. It was his individual impeccable style and his qualities as the 'gentle, perfect' accompanist that endeared him to instrumentalists and connoisseurs alike. To describe him as a virtuoso would be to limit the range of his musicianship. The National Centre's Archives have some extended recordings of his art at its best, a reminder to students what fine tabla-playing — solo or accompanied — can be

News and Notes

Ranga-Sri (Little Ballet Troupe): 1952-1978

Ranga-Sri (Little Ballet Troupe), founded on January 20, 1952, is now exactly twenty-six years old. The core of the troupe was drawn from the Central Squad of the Indian People's Theatre Association and included

From Ramayana.



Appuni Kartha, Gul Bardhan, Dashrathlal, Abani Dasgupta and Behadur Khan. The guiding spirit behind all its activities was Shanti Bardhan. His earlier years had been spent with Uday Shanker at the Culture Centre at Almora. Later he choreographed such successful ballets as *Bhookha Hai Bengal*, *Spirit of India*, *India Immortal*, and *Discovery of India*. During a spell of illness, which lasted two years, he meditated on the life-size puppets which he had seen in his childhood in the villages of Bengal. Out of this grew the concept of the *Ramayana*, with its accent not on religion but on a simple and universal human experience. The use of living puppets and of elements from the classical and folk forms added a fresh dimension to the existing tradition. Rehearsals,

From Panchatantra



involving twenty-two artistes, continued for one full year, and the entire undertaking was possible due to generous support and encouragement from Ambubhai and Chotalal Seth. The ballet was so popular that it went on to do nearly three hundred shows.

Panchatantra, with birds and beasts in recognizably human situations and with its happy blend of fantasy, humour and realism, was equally popular. Half-way through the rehearsals Shanti Bardhan died (September 3, 1954). The troupe could sustain the tragic loss and carry on solely because of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru's genuine concern for its future. Panditji was present at the first performance of *Panchatantra* in February 1955

Appuni Kartha (in the initial stages) and later Prabhat Ganguli (who was closely associated with Shanti Bardhan during his stay at Almora) took over the responsibility of choreographing new ballets: *Meghdoota*, *Kshudito Pashana*, *Discovery of India* (designed as a homage to Pandit Nehru), and *Scarecrow*. Bahadur Khan and Ranu Bardhan composed the music of the new productions. *Bhairavi* and *Chaturanga* were inspired by the Mayurbhanj Chhau dance style. *Muktadhara* by Tagore had Narendra Sharma from Delhi as guest choreographer. The latest ballet *Kanyakumari*, based on a Tamil story, is choreographed by Raghavan under the guidance of Prabhat Ganguli

The thirty-one artistes who now form the troupe are housed with their families in a large house in Gwalior. They have a full working day, which includes music and dance lessons, exercises, and dance-composition study. The Chhau dance instructors who choreographed *Bhairavi* are still with the troupe and impart training in the style. Instruction in the Kathakali form is based on what was imbibed from the guru at the Culture Centre in Almora

The artistes themselves design and make the costumes and décor. Since 1971, a grant from the Government of India has enabled the troupe to devote all its working hours and energies to rehearsing the ballets in its repertoire and planning new ones. It now functions as a professional company and training institute. The troupe has visited several countries of Europe, Latin America, and South East Asia; it has performed in various cities in the Far and Middle East. It has also won prestigious international awards at Edinburgh, in Mexico and Holland.

The troupe has been able to survive several ordeals because it is conscious of the responsibility of embodying in its work the creative vision of Shanti Bardhan and his ideal of moulding traditional and well-loved forms into a contemporary idiom.

— GUL BARDHAN

*Demonstration of New Musical Instruments, Music Centre,
University of Bombay, October 25, 1977.*

The development of musical instruments in India has been an evolutionary process channelised by hereditary traditions and governed by empirical methods. Musical appeal and aesthetic considerations have dominated this process, often relegating practical considerations to a secondary place. The influence of science, on this process, has been incidental and remote. Attempts at devising new instruments, or improving existing ones, have been few and far between. For want of a suitable forum many of these attempts have gone unnoticed and remain unchronicled.

The Music Centre of the University of Bombay made such a forum available to Pandit Ambalal Sitari, Dr. C. V. Mehendale, A. M. Ekbote and Datta Davjekar through a public demonstration of their new musical instruments. The demonstration was held at the Centre on October 25, 1977.

Noteworthy among these instruments were tanpura-s of a new design by Pandit Sitari; *Pranav-Bahar*, a variation of the sur-bahar, also by Pandit Sitari, and the *Anil-Vadyam*, a new type of wind instrument by Dr. Mehendale. These, in the real sense, could be described as new musical instruments. The other instruments demonstrated in the programme were: Electronic Drone — Dr. Mehendale, Electronic Metronome with controlled *Tala-khali-sama* rhythm — A.M. Ekbote, Electronic Drone, White noise generator etc. — Datta Davjekar.

These instruments could at best be described as electronic musical aids. A detailed review of the instruments mentioned earlier is intended here.

New Tanpura

Practical and scientific considerations need not always be in conflict with musical requirements. On the contrary they can help and enhance the tonal quality of instruments. Pandit Sitari's tanpura is an example. The richness of tone and longer sustenance of this tanpura result from a simple and easy-to-construct design, based on elementary scientific considerations. In this instrument the first deviation from the traditional design replaces the difficult-to-standardise gourd by a simple cylindrical resonator made out of carefully selected varieties of wood. This is a flat cylinder with a diameter of 25 cm and a height of 1.0 cm. The 100 cm long teakwood stem (*dandi*) runs diametrically through the cylindrical resonant cavity down to the base of the instrument. This second deviation gives a sturdy foundation to the instrument and provides a strong support for the bridge. The third deviation replaces the traditional hollow stem by a solid stem. In one respect, this is a desirable modification since it eliminates the complex problem of matching the resonances of two cavities of different shapes. However, this modification should be accepted or rejected only after the mutual contributions of two properly matched resonant cavities (to the tonal structure of

the traditional tanpura) have been thoroughly analysed and understood. In the traditional tanpura the junction piece, between the gourd and the stem, is labouriously carved out of wood. Pandit Sitari has eliminated this piece from his design. The fourth and the last deviation is in the use of the worm-and-gear mechanism for tensioning the strings. This system makes the tuning easier by providing a finer control of the tension and prevents unwinding of the strings thus giving a stable tuning. The bridge and *javari* threads are the same as in the traditional tanpura.

One cannot but appreciate the simplicity of design of Pandit Sitari's tanpura and the richness of its tonal structure.

Pranav-Bahar

The deviations incorporated in the design of this instrument are essentially similar to those described above for the new tanpura. As a further deviation, Pandit Sitari has used a stretched leather membrane, in place of wood as the rear cover of the flat cylindrical resonator. The tonal structure of this instrument is remarkably rich in bass notes. The contribution of leather membrane in introducing the bass notes can be ascertained only after more exhaustive investigations.

Anil-Vadyam

Dr. Mehendale's *Anil-Vadyam* sounds like a mellow flute and in some respects is similar to the flute. Like the flute, it is a cross-blown wind instrument; but unlike the flute the pitch of its sound can be controlled in a continuous manner.

Constructionally, *Anil-Vadyam* is a tapering wooden tube, 1.25 metre long, with a narrow slit parallel to the axis, running almost the full length of the instrument. Variations in the length of the resonant air column are effected by closing or opening this slit to different lengths. This is achieved by using a roller-and-belt mechanism. Along its full length, the slit is flanked by two parallel 12 mm extruded aluminium angles. A flexible belt, about 25 mm wide, pressed by a roller, sits neatly in the channel formed by the aluminium angles. A small quantity of grease on the belt and on the aluminium angles ensures air-tight closure of the slit upto the point where the roller presses the belt. About 25 mm further down, another roller lifts the belt away from the slit. The belt remains lifted thus upto the farther end of the tube where it is firmly anchored to a small aluminium post. This twin roller mechanism can be comfortably glided along the entire length of the channel using the spacious finger rest fixed above this mechanism. While playing, the slender end of this instrument is held near the mouth with one hand and the other hand is used to control the position of the roller mechanism and hence the pitch of the note produced by the instrument. Without the necessity of over-blowing, the instrument can produce notes covering three full octaves. Continuous control over the length of the resonating column makes the instrument well suited for producing *meend* or rendering micro-tonal intervals.

Dr. Mehendale says that the taper in the instrument is intentional and was introduced to overcome the difficulty of achieving smoothness of tones at the lower notes. This is understandable because the taper will discourage resonance of the Helmholtz cavity formed by the residual portion of the tube that has the slit open. The belt, aluminium angles and the grease are sound-absorbing materials, each with different acoustic properties than the wood. Their use is likely to affect adversely the energy-breath-sustenance considerations.

Anil-Vadyam is a versatile instrument with a lot of potential and some handicaps. Nevertheless, it is a new musical instrument posing fresh challenge for the artist.

— MOHAN PHADNIS

The Calcutta Theatre Scene Today

With the irredeemable decline of the groups that dominated the theatre in Calcutta in the fifties and sixties, the mid-seventies presented a bleak landscape. The Emergency provided several groups with a decent excuse, though they had already brought theatre down to a routine of songs, buffoonery, facile romanticism, and febrile radicalism all lumped together. The trend began with the phenomenal commercial success of a number of Brecht adaptations distorted beyond recognition, with a conveniently limited reading of Brechtian theories at secondhand being exploited to rationalize histrionic and musical inadequacy, oversimplification of issues, and puerile sentimentalization. The old commercial theatre and the revamped Jatra saw a revival of interest drawing away audiences from the non-commercial theatre. Some of the experimental groups trying to reorientate themselves to the new situation chose to seek for the popularity nostrum so desperately that they soon degenerated into less competent mutants of the commercial theatre. Several groups broke up into ineffective segments, and there was a steady flow of actors and directors from the non-commercial theatre to the commercial theatre and the Jatra.

Utpal Dutt's People's Little Theatre retained its political character sniping at the continuous curtailment of democratic rights in plays located in remote times and remote places. The allusions were thinly veiled, and Dutt's sense of a theatre of spectacle and dynamism remained evident all through. In the last months of the Emergency, his *Ebaar Rajar Peala* told the story of a Jatra actor who becomes, by a strange quirk of fortune, the ruler of a princely state and models himself on Hitler. The irony of the play lies in the clash between the Jatra playwright who had provided the actor

with all his lines in the past and the actor in his new role trying desperately to free himself from dependence on his mentor. As usual Dutt uses torture, rollicking humour, biting satire, and moments of inspired idealism in a combination which he has made his own. Situations range from the broad humour of someone reading with intense concentration a newspaper with the mast-head alone intact, and the rest censored out, to the graver irony of the image in the mirror stepping out (as the real Hitler) to compliment the Jatra actor on being one up on his original: the actor evolved into a flawless dictator, even as he upheld democratic values in his public orations.

Shekhar Chatterjee and his Theatre Unit produced the closest approximation to a Brechtian production with his *Pontu Lahe* (from *Puntila and his man Matti*), allowing for direct addresses to the audience, anti-illusionistic use of stage property, yet never missing the irony of the rich man who, in his relationship with the servant, becomes kind and generous when drunk and cruel and insensitive when sober. Chatterjee's other production, *Atotuku Basa*, adapted from a play by a contemporary Bavarian playwright, F. X. Kroetz, was presented in an intimate theatre setting in the Max Mueller Bhavan Library to an audience of sixty people at a time; the quiet authenticity of humdrum middle-class existence in all its details is shattered when a couple comes face to face with capitalist heartlessness in the shape of industrial waste poured into a pool endangering the life of their child. The couple, happy in its sheltered nest, experiences a rude awakening to the world outside in rigorously naturalistic theatre.

Two new groups emerged in the seventies. Chetana, led by Arun Mukherjee, found immediate popularity with *Marich Samvad*, freely intercutting through three situations of pressures brought to bear upon an individual in a political situation, one from the *Ramayana*, one from a draft-dodger's plight in the United States, and the third set in a Bengal village. Songs and gestures held from one situation to another made the linkage between the situations. But *Jagannath*, remotely derived from a Lu Hsun story, played with attitudes and evaluations directed towards a timid, humiliated village fool, whom circumstances turn into a revolutionary in spite of himself. Arun Mukherjee playing the role himself created a likeableness that never assumed glorification. By surrounding him with the pontificating political leader, and all the familiar stereotypes of a Bengali village, Mukherjee gives this complex character the dimension of mystery. Cringingly pathetic at times, he manages in a moment's sailing gait or a little gesture of endearing generosity to reach a different level and then he returns to the fool's mask almost immediately, revealing delicate potentialities in the character. Nilkantha Sengupta's *Daansaagar* (an adaptation from Premchand's *Kafan*), presented by Theatre Commune, was an exercise in ruthless naturalism, somewhat mellowed in a melodramatic-ecstatic ending.

Badal Sircar and his Shatabdi had its most creative phase in the small lecture hall that they use as a theatre every Friday evening. The acting area changes with the audience placed differently according to the needs of a play or rather the way it chooses to treat the audience, condemning it at times, reaching out to it on other occasions, or even trying to draw it

into the orbit of the play. *Bhoma* used the materials of the life of a Sunderban peasant who bears the scars left by Nature and wild beasts on his body, traces of the rigours through which he had played his role in the great battle for the reclamation of land in a part of the country lying with the sea around it and the forests encroaching relentlessly. The voice of the hungry man crying for food becomes a stronger force than the satiric dimensions of the urban middle-class running after paltry dreams or the heroic physicality of the men still fighting against Nature. More an experience conceived in terms of sounds, slogans presented both positively and negatively, and physical movements and formations, *Bhoma* leaves its urban audience with a sense of shame and guilt for its indifference to the experience of the mute majority. *Sukhapathya Bharater Itihaas* and *Bhanga Manush* treat history in more abstract terms, raising a protest against exploitation and the immoral power of money. *Bhanga Manush* uses the minimum of words; the words are used to make contact with the auditors individually, while the ideas are given symbolic forms in structures made of human bodies and movements. The same meaningfulness of the human body is put to different uses in the childlike simplicity of the fairytale world of *Hattamalar Oparey* and in the interpretation of the verbal poetry of Mohit Chattopadhyay's *Captain Hurrah*, Sircar's latest production. Sircar's theatre provides a model for a theatre that Calcutta and its suburbs need — a theatre that stands close to the people, can be easily carried from place to place, and is not bound within the mechanism of commercialization. It is a 'poor theatre' that affords a freedom that few groups in Calcutta enjoy any longer.

— SAMIK BANDYOPADHYAY

National Drama Festival, Cochin, Nov. 26—Dec. 4, 1977

The Central and State Sangeet Natak Akademies jointly sponsored for the first time an All India Drama Festival in the South — at Cochin in Kerala. The Central Akademi had on two former occasions organised such festivals at Delhi and Bhopal for which the stress was respectively on classical theatre and plays written by promising young playwrights. This time the decision was to have, as far as possible, plays containing traditional theatre elements, plays that tried to make creative use of Indian traditional forms. As a result, *Ghashiram Kotwal* (Marathi), *Charandas Chor* (Hindi), *Hayavadana* (Kannada), *Purancheri* (Tamil), *Avanavan Kadampa* (Malayalam) were chosen. *Jasma Oden* (Gujarati), a folk play, was added.

Jagannath by Chetana was invited from Bengal but due to some last-minute adjustments the group brought *Marich Samvad* instead. The host state, which was given the choice of including another play, selected *Crime 27/1128* by C. J. Thomas. It does not strictly fall under the category intended for the Festival. But it is a significant Malayalam play, written way back in the fifties, and has for the most part remained a challenge to producers in Kerala. Thus eight plays were presented during the Festival.

The Festival started at the Fine Arts Society Auditorium (Cochin) on November 26, 1977 and was inaugurated by the veteran Koodiyattom artiste, Mani Madhava Chakyar. Cochin proved to be the ideal venue for such a festival, because every day more than forty percent of the audience understood the language of the play which was presented.

The Festival started with *Jasma Oden* (Indian National Theatre). This folk tale, depicted through the use of the traditional form of Bhavai, was refreshing theatre and its conventions like the female roles being enacted by males proved to be of interest to the audience. Kavalam Narayana Panniker's *Avanavan Kadampa* as directed by G. Aravindan was presented on the second day. It tried to synthesise the various elements of traditional theatre in Kerala to depict a folk theme, and employed colourful, rhythmic and highly stylised movement patterns and dances, based on the performing tradition of Kerala. On the third day *Ghashiram Kotwal* by Vijay Tendulkar was presented by the Theatre Academy, Pune. Director Jabbar Patel's treatment of the play, combining elements of Maharashtra's folk theatre, found an immediate response in the audience, which was captivated by its compositions, groupings, freezes, and stylisation. Dr. Mohan Agashe who played Nana was so impressive that the frequent comment heard was that the play should be called *Nana Fadnavis* rather than *Ghashiram Kotwal*. Girish Karnad's *Hayavadana* was presented next. It did not come up to the expectations of an audience already familiar with Girish Karnad and B. V. Karanth. Perhaps the spectators expected far too much of this play. But they admired B. V. Karanth's fortitude: he went through the performance in the face of a personal tragedy. The day before the show he received news of his father's death.

Purancheri, the Tamil entry, had all the basic ingredients of a successful presentation, but the actors failed to project its essence. The second Malayalam play to be presented in the Festival was C. J. Thomas's *Crime 27/1128*. It was presented by *Nataka Kalari* and its young and trained theatre workers. Conceived in the style of an anti-play at a time when the 'well-made' play was the vogue, the play appears on the surface as an audio-visual comment on the mockery of death. But a closer study reveals it to be a sensitive artist's explosive protest against sham and hypocrisy. Director P. K. Venkuttan Nair's direction was neat and the troupe was able to project an ensemble feeling. That a capacity audience, and rather restless at that, went along with the play speaks of its dramatic strength.

Habib Tanvir's *Charandas Chor* (Naya Theatre) left a strong impression on the audience. It was fascinating to watch folk artistes appealing to



From Cherandas Chor

a modern sensibility. The play had a smooth flow; it was almost like a ballad being recited. There was something simple and authentic in the performances which gave a different dimension to the production.

The production of *Marich Samvad* by Chetana was staged on the last day. Arun Mukherjee placed the legend of Marich in the context of modern society and used to advantage certain Brechtian techniques to project the play.

On November 30, the visiting troupes watched Kathakali performances by Kalamandalam Krishnan Nair, the distinguished Kathakali artist. There was also a performance of Mohiniattam. In the discussion held in the evening, Rajendra Nath presided. Dr. Ayyappa Panniker, noted Malayalam poet, introduced a paper on *The Play from Script to Stage*. His approach was mainly based on Indian dramaturgy, and several of the actors, directors, and theatre critics present participated in the discussion.

This Festival was important not only because the memorable productions that were presented but because it offered theatre-lovers a unique,

opportunity to witness, in varied degrees, attempts to integrate the folk and classical theatre traditions of India into new styles of playwriting and production. Among the plays, some had a strictly traditional and folk character; others were presented by folk artistes and there were modern attempts at imbibing the various theatrical elements inherent in folk and classical forms. In certain plays these attempts heightened the dramatic essence and strengthened the total structure. But in certain others the elements could not be effectively fused and in a few cases the play itself became weakened by the conscious overloading of folk ingredients. But, on the whole, the attempts were quite refreshing. There was an awareness in all the major regional groups of a live factor at work, a factor which could bring an Indianness to playwriting and production and was distinct from a mere imitation of the western pattern. The success or failure of an individual production was insignificant compared to the total trend, which was beneficial and reassuring. It might lead to the evolution of a new Indian theatre more rooted in our own theatre traditions.

Another interesting factor to be noted was that many productions were scripted by directors to suit their particular production styles. The Festival thus also raised the issue of the director and his role in presentday theatre practice.

Of course, a festival cannot provide answers to all the problems of theatre. But this Festival did offer us a kaleidoscopic view of what is happening in Indian theatre. Workers in various regional theatres met to exchange experiences and were able to sense the inner rhythm of theatre life in our country. To that extent the Festival achieved its objectives and was successful.

— G. SANKARA PILLAI

Book Reviews

THE CONCISE OXFORD DICTIONARY OF BALLET by Horst Koegler, Oxford University Press, 1977, £4.95 (*In English*).

This is another addition to the many concise, reasonably comprehensive, reference books that we have come to expect from the Oxford University Press. It is the work of Horst Koegler, the well-known German critic and writer on ballet and, in fact, has grown from his earlier *Friedrichs Ballettlexikon von A-Z* published in 1972 in German. As the Foreword says: "While the German version can still be recognized as the point of departure, the final product has turned out to possess an individuality all of its own. Not only has matter been cut which was of interest to German-speaking readers and the focus shifted towards what the Anglo-American reader might be looking for. In addition there has been a general reconsideration of the distribution of emphasis, and a considerable number of new entries have been added".

The word ballet, to start with, meant "a theatrical representation consisting of dancing and pantomime, originally employed to illustrate foreign dress and manners". Its present connotation of dance as spectacle is a relatively recent one. The Dictionary contains over 5000 entries, of which the majority would seem to be devoted to dancers, making it an impressive who's who in dancing. Its main concern is classical ballet in the last three hundred years, but it has entries devoted to the Dance in countries like China, Iran, Japan and dance forms far removed from traditional ballet. The modern dance, for example, particularly the many contemporary styles and personalities on the American scene, are well represented. And as the Dance has hardly ever had an existence totally independent of music, composers of ballet music feature prominently in the Dictionary.

With a dance tradition so advanced and sophisticated as that of India one would have expected a little better coverage of the Indian scene. There are brief entries under Bharatanatyam, Kathakali, Kathak and Manipuri. Of about a dozen of the Indian dancers mentioned, only Uday Shankar and Balasaraswati can be considered among the great. None of the many other 'greats' in the various styles and idioms — Kunju Kurup (Kathakali), Vedantam Satyanarayana Sharma (Kuchipudi), Balu Bhagavata (Bhagavata Mela), Sambhu Maharaj, Birju Maharaj (Kathak), Mani Madhava Chakyar (Koodiyattam), Amubi Singh, Atomba Singh (Manipuri) are listed in the Dictionary. Rukmini Devi's name is conspicuously absent.

"Bharata Natyam" is described as "a female solo dance, over 2000 years old, performed by Hindu devadasis (temple dancers) practised today mainly in the region of Madras". This might be pardonable in a tourist handbook, but not in an Oxford Dictionary. The brief description of Kathakali is

more satisfactory. However, a beginning has been made in creating a concise and useful reference book on a vast subject, and understandably for the Anglo-American reader. Future editions can fill up blanks, if only on a selective basis, and bring more authenticity and depth to the treatment of dance forms and traditions far removed from those of the west.

— N.M.

HINDI RANGAMANCHA AUR PANDIT NARAYAN PRASAD 'BETAB' (1853-1960) by Dr. Vidyawati Lakshmanrao Namre, Vishwavidyalaya Prakashan, Varanasi, 1972, Rs. 60.00 (*In Hindi*).

An appalling state of affairs prevailed in the Hindi Theatre during the nineteenth century. Neglected by the great masters of the golden period of Bhakti and even artistes of the Ornate Era (*Reeti Kala*), the Hindi Theatre was monopolised by minor playwrights; it was groping for a way of remaining in touch with art and life. Bhartendu Harishchandra (1850-85) was the great pioneer who ushered in the era of modernity. After his death the stage again drifted towards naked showmanship, the loud acting styles and the saucy dialogues associated with what was wrongly termed as drama in the days of Parsee Theatrical Companies. Betab was one of the few who played a notable part in checking this degeneration of the dramatic art and prevented its total divorce from life and literature. His works have not passed into cheap reprints; his name does not fortify the academic citadel and now he is a part of the tradition against which he fought. But he will always be remembered as one of those neglected yet significant writers through whom the Hindi stage survived during the early decades of this century.

Betab's daughter, Dr. Vidyawati Namre, has rendered a very useful service to Hindi theatre lovers by bringing into focus this comparatively neglected phase and the stage personalities of the time. She has brought to light relevant material which had never seen print and which lay unheeded in the personal libraries of Betab's family and of contemporary Parsee artistes. This undertaking was possible only because of Dr. Vidyawati Namre's missionary zeal. She was as close to the man as to his work; she happened to be a reliable witness watching the last phase of the professional writing for Parsee Companies. Her contribution is important because she has explored the areas not covered by what are usually considered as basic works on the subject, like Dhanajibhai Patel's *Takhtani Tawarikh* and Jahangir Khambata's *Maro Nataki Anubhava*. Her findings have added to the factual knowledge of this subject, first brought into literary focus by the work of Dr. Kumud Mehta, Dr. Somnath Gupta and Dr. Abdul Alim Nami. There is no doubt that Dr. Vidyawati Namre's work offers to future historians of the Hindi stage more material on this comparatively less known link in literary

history than was hitherto available and her work deserves the praise it has received from university assessors and critics.

This scholarly book has two distinct parts. The first traces the early development of the modern Hindi stage; the second deals with the life and work of Betab. The historical portions, which cover the modern period, have faithfully recorded all the details of the controversy regarding the earliest Hindi dramas and the first dramatic performances, marking the birth of the modern Hindi stage. In an introductory section such as this there is little scope for verifying the authenticity of various works. However I feel that the conclusions need to be re-examined, particularly in a case like the Govind Hulas Natak. This is essential in any discussion and resolving of such a major problem of theatre history. A notable feature of this portion is the assessment of the contribution of non-Hindi speaking regions (particularly Maharashtra, Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh) to the development of the Hindi Theatre. This indirectly points to the acceptability of *khari-boli* centuries before it became the official language.

The second and the major portion of the book has been devoted to Narayan Prasad Betab and Dr. Vidyawati Namre has collected and classified all the material relation to the struggles of an aspiring playwright to evolve not merely an acceptable language (that of a creative writer moulded for mass communication), but an idiom of expression bridging the gulf between the writer's ideals and the common man's realities. In the process the problems of Hindi-Urdu fanaticism were resolved to some extent.

Dr. Vidyawati Namre has also tried to evaluate the literary merit of Betab's work. Here she has confined herself to the traditional standards of valuation, the conventional coinage of criticism—*rasa*, character and dialogue. Her evaluation, therefore, lacks the touch of modernity and fails to bring out that experimental element in Betab's creations which made him a changing man in a changing period. But, on the whole, her conclusions are correct because her strength lies in allowing the facts to speak for themselves.

Dr. Vidyawati Namre has made no attempt to question, in the light of newly discovered facts, the normally accepted theories of dramatic art. But she has succeeded in collecting valuable data and her present work will serve as useful source material for future historians of Hindi drama.

— C. L. PRABHAT

VIEWS ON CINEMA by Mrinal Sen, Ishan, Calcutta, 1977, Rs. 25.00 (In English).

When a collection of Satyajit Ray's writings over a period of 25 years was published in 1976, the film-maker had confessed that most of the pieces were "the outcomes of promises for articles made at unguarded moments". Mrinal Sen has been making films for more than 20 years but has perhaps not been writing for so long. He wrote, whenever he found an occasion appropriate or a subject pertinent enough to make a point, to create an immediate effect. He does not claim that the pieces were casual efforts although like Ray he, too, could not have foreseen that they would eventually find a place within the hard-bound covers of a book. Even so the very nature of Sen's writings and the manner in which they have been assembled in this volume give them a casualness, a disorganised look that is nowhere evident in the Ray book, but is somewhat typical even of Sen's professional work.

Sen does not attempt a systematic development of thinking either in the aesthetic or practical sphere. The keynote of his writing seems to lie in a quotation (which forms a kind of introduction) from one of the seventeen essays that constitute the first part of the book: "What is important, therefore, is not to seek unanimity but to provoke discussion and, in the process, to raise controversy to the extent necessary. And, in all probability, all works of art are, in lesser or greater degree, prone to be controversial" (p. 50).

Raise controversy he does. The fact that Hiralal Sen made the first feature, even before Edwin Porter's *The Great Train Robbery* (1904), has never been conclusively proved by any Indian film historian. Sen makes only a passing reference to the issue while dealing with the lack of "substance" in the "silent" or even the early "talking" period of Bengali cinema. Subsequent years—during and after the war—marked a change of style which brought commercial success but, again, hardly any purposefulness or a realisation of cinema's social role. A stray effort like Nemai Ghosh's *Chinnamool* was no indication of the general absence of courage and conviction.

The essay, *The Movie-Maker of Calcutta*, did not perhaps offer much scope for a searching analysis; the primary purpose in this piece and subsequent essays like *Low-Budget Films*, *The Political Scene in Cinema*, *Films and Official Codes* and *What is a Good Film?* appears to be to put forward a strong case for experimentation and for politicisation in cinema. Sen justifies experiments on the ground that Indian films at present rarely go beyond the achievements of the past. "We need such experiments—experiments to enlarge the area of operation, experiments to mark the advent of a new genre of cinema, experiments, above all, to sharpen the medium as an instrument of social change" (pp. 8-9). Social change? Does Sen seriously believe he can bring that about by an overdose of technical gimmickry? If Sen's experimentation is a matter of "sheer desperation", it is, in the ultimate analysis, experimentation for its own sake. In most cases, it is certainly not invested with an inevitability in the context—a context that should, but usually does not, grow into a minutely conceived pattern.

From experimentation to pamphleteering is a short jump, and this is something Sen does not explain quite satisfactorily. His films relate inevitably, as he says in one of the three interviews, to contemporary reality. One can only admire the sincerity and conviction with which he states that, in examining the reality, around him, he "cannot help being partisan" (p. 97). But it remains to be explained how social relevance and involvement can be reconciled with the cumbersome and often distracting technique that he employs. Besides, no clear answer emerges to the question of how far the Indian audience is prepared to accept a political message on celluloid. On the whole, Sen appears to have drawn inspiration from what Eisenstein, Godard and Solanas have done in their respective countries and from the achievements of Latin American film-makers who underwent political persecution.

Sen is distressed by the stony silence of fear-struck and safety-conscious Bengali intellectuals during what he considers the 'openly fascistic' atmosphere of 1971. But he could have found an explanation for this in his own essay where he says that a film-maker (a political film-maker, that is) "needs a base to protect and inspire him". It is a matter of doubt whether the "base" that facilitated the spread of the Indian People's Theatre Movement in 1943 is still in operation. Sen's contention is that not only should "unpalatable things" be said but that political cinema should enter into official calculations in the formulation of codes. If he criticises "stupid control by the authorities", it is mainly on this count. And his main complaint against the Khosla report is that it refuses to touch on political issues. The tinted glass through which Sen looks at the world presents the urgent need for censorship reforms only in terms of the need to make more political films.

The tinted glass is again in evidence in Sen's assessment of low-budget films. He bitterly indicts the Establishment because, according to him, it encourages expensive projects and conventional techniques, and maintains the status quo. He believes that low-budget, even FFC-sponsored, films should necessarily be in direct confrontation with the Establishment and regrets the fact that this does not happen. Even as striking an example as *Pather Panchali* failed to usher a movement. The fear of liquidation induced a general urge for compromise that "ultimately went the Establishment way". By the "new cinema", Sen means films that are unconventional, dissenting and iconoclastic; he concedes that they have a minority audience and face problems of exhibition. It does not seem to bother him whether these films are financed by Establishment agencies. Nor does the idea of good, low-budget films (not necessarily political) running parallel to the big-budget escapist extravaganzas (which also have a kind of certain 'social' relevance by the mere fact of their enthusing such a large number of film-goers) appear to enter into his calculations. In any case, what position did Sen himself occupy prior to *Akash Kusum*? It is a past that he does not entirely disown but which embarrasses him no end even as he tries desperately to rationalise it.

There is, however, no embarrassment or lack of sincerity in Sen's acknowledgement of the greatness of contemporaries. Satyajit Ray's use of

big stars and his comments on Indian "new wave" film-makers are matters on which Sen has some reservations. But there is reverence for Ray's memorable achievements, unstinted endorsement (in his review of Ray's book) of his views on Indian cinema, as a whole, and praise for his "work of investigation and revelation, his sense of humour and his probing into the reality and technology of cinema". Sen's frequent trips to foreign film festivals have prompted other likes—Oshima and Tsuchimoto of Japan, the new Latin American and African film-makers and, predictably, the non-conformist British and American directors. Lindsay Anderson's work, for instance, has inspired him to contribute a rather emotional piece on "If..." to a Calcutta weekly.

Like the "If..." review the volume itself seems to have been the result of a sudden impulse to collect scattered, fragmented and, in some cases, quite trivial pieces. For what can justify the inclusion of skimpy and irrelevant descriptions of himself at work? The brief and vague pieces, *On Violence*, *On Connection*, *On Intellectual Perception* and *To Build an Attitude*, hardly do justice to the seriousness of the subjects. The reproduction of the triangular correspondence on *Akash Kusum* by Sen, Ray and Ashis Barman is almost as pointless as the synopses of four films and a piece on contemporary Bengali theatre. It might have been possible to gloss over some of these blemishes had the editing and proof-reading been more polished. But then polish, Sen might say, has never been his primary consideration.

— SWAPAN MULLICK

STUDIES IN THE NATYASHASTRA by G. H. Tarlekar, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1975, Rs. 70.00 (*In English*).

This doctoral thesis of the Poona University, with its modest title, *Studies in the Natyashastra*, is a comprehensive and thorough study of the various aspects of Sanskrit drama and its performance, with special reference to the *Natyashastra*, utilising all the relevant material on the subject. It is an authentic and reliable study and can be safely recommended to serious students of ancient Sanskrit drama. Though primarily based on the *Natyashastra*, other works on dramaturgy (like the *Dasharupaka* and the *Sangitaratnakara*) and the traditions of classical dance drama styles in various parts of the country have also been put to proper use. In this connection the author came twice to Kerala to study the Kutiyattam tradition directly from the Chakyars.

The introductory chapter discusses in detail the various theories on the origin and evolution of Indian dramatic art; the author accepts the view of indigenous origin and considers that Sanskrit drama was in vogue even at the time of Panini. Following Bharata's *Natyashastra*, he describes the ten main types of *Rupaka*-s and the various elements of drama such as the

four styles of *Vrtti*-s, the *Lasyanga*-s, the types of characters, and the plot construction; he makes an attempt to survey the development of Sanskrit drama by an examination of extant classical dramas like those of Bhasa, Ashvaghosha, Kalidasa and Bhavabhuti; a short account is also given of the minor types of dramas, the *Uparupaka*-s, and the later dance-dramas in different parts of the country such as Kathakali, Yakshagana, Kuchipudi, Bhagavatamela, Ankiyanat, Yatra and Tamasha.

Chapter One, which deals with the purpose of *Netya*, points out that giving delight to the spectators by evoking an aesthetic experience in them is the main purpose of drama and explains in detail the theory of *Rasa* as defined by Bharata and elucidated by later commentators. Chapter Two is on *Abhinaya* with its four aspects of *Vachika* (verbal), *Aharya* (costume and make-up), *Angika* (gestures and the movements of the various parts of the face and limbs) and *Sattvika* (based on temperament). The various *Anubhava*-s or the outward expressions of mental states for the various *Sthayibhava*-s (permanent states) and the *Vyabhicharibhava*-s (transitory states) are described in detail. Then follows the *Angikabhinaya*, various types of movements of the minor limbs, the glances (together with their names, description and application); hand-poses, single and combined; the gaits, postures etc. *Vachikabhinaya* deals with accents, intonation etc. The various graces of women, both natural and voluntary, the types of female characters and the stages of love are also dealt with here. *Aharyabhinaya* describes make-up, costumes and ornaments.

Chapter Three, *Music and Dance*, deals with vocal music, instrumental music, the *dhruva* songs.

The next chapter is devoted to the theatre, the troupe, the spectators etc. Then follows an account of the performance of the preliminaries and the staging of some scenes from the Sanskrit plays of the classical period.

Chapter Six includes a fairly detailed survey of Kutiyattam.

The last chapter contains some suggestions on the presentation of Sanskrit plays in our present times. There are four appendices: Sculptures suggested by Sanskrit plays; *Karana*-s; the theatres in South-East Asia and the East; and Ancient Indian Costumes.

On page 248, the author, basing his findings on the Kerala tradition, ascribes the *Attaprakara*-s or stage manuals to Tolan, the Brahmin adviser of King Kulasekhara Varman (tenth century). But the available texts of the *Attaprakara*-s belong to a much later date, and must have been written by the Chakyars themselves probably on the basis of an earlier tradition.

The section on the performance of select scenes from classical dramas in Chapter Five is interesting, though it does contain a certain subjective element.

— K. KUNJUNNI RAJA

BHARATIYA SANGEETA KOSHA by Vimalakant Roy Choudhari, translated into Hindi by Madan Lal Vyas. Published by the Bharatiya Jnanpith, New Delhi, 1975, Rs. 25.00.

SHREE SANGEETA SAURABHA compiled and notated by Pandit Jasraj, edited by Madan Lal Vyas. Published by Shri Rudradatta Sinhji Jayawant Sinhji, Sanand (Gujarat), 1976. Price not mentioned. (*In Hindi*).

Music education in India has now attained university standards and consequently the field of musicological research has also widened to a considerable degree. Although several authoritative books on the subject have been published in recent years, no author has so far attempted to bring out a book which is in the nature of a dictionary of musical terms.

Bharatiya Sangeeta Kosha by Vimalakant Roy Choudhari can claim to be the first and only book of its kind. This reviewer would unhesitatingly describe it as a landmark in the history of lexicography.

Since the author is an eminent musician and a distinguished teacher and musicologist, the work offers ample evidence of his scholarship and his ability to impart knowledge.

This book of 255 pages is quite handy; yet it manages to cover a wide compass. It lists over 300 words which include terms used not only in vocal and instrumental music but also in the field of percussion and dance. In addition to this, the book incorporates genealogical information of as many as 90 *gharana*-s and has a copious index.

Of particular interest is the author's excellent elucidation of terms like *Prakara Bheda* (pp. 72-76), *Murchhana* (pp. 94-97) and *Raga* (pp. 101-105). Equally enlightening is the description of 78 instruments mentioned under the category *Vadya* (p. 119). The category includes indigenous instruments and a few western ones but curiously enough no Carnatic varieties.

The book under review is a Hindi version by Madan Lal Vyas of the Bengali original. Vyas himself is a noted linguist and critic. His mode of expression is lucid and his style fluid.

Bharatiya Sangeeta Kosha will widen our horizons of musical appreciation and serve as an indispensable tool for those who wish to perform and listen. As a reference book, it will also prove to be of immense benefit to students of music and researchers. The Bharatiya Jnanpith would do well to have it translated into English and also into other Indian languages for the benefit of those readers who do not know Hindi.

One, however, feels that, in addition to genealogical information about the *gharana*-s, the author should have listed these *gharana*-s in the main body of his book along with their brief history and salient characteristics. This would have further enhanced the value of his work. A few inaccuracies

in the names of the exponents of some of the *gharana*-s should be corrected in the next edition.

* * *

Shree Sangeeta Saurabha, compiled and notated by the celebrated vocalist Pandit Jasraj, contains a choice selection of *raga bandishe*-s and devotional songs, all composed by a great patron of music, Maharana Shree Jayawant Sinhji Ranamal Sinhji of the former princely state of Sanand.

The book is divided into two parts. The first, *Gayana Khand*, deals with 22 *raga*-s, both traditional ones and those created by the Maharana. They are accompanied by technical data, followed by *bandishe*-s with proper notation. The tunes of the *bandishe*-s have in some cases been composed by the noted vocalist, Pandit Maniram, the eldest brother and *guru* of Pandit Jasraj.

Part Two, titled *Bhakti Khand*, contains 19 devotional pieces which include invocatory songs, as well as *qawwali*, *rubai* and *garba* items. Some of these are also set in *raga* framework with detailed notation.

The collection under review bears the stamp of the Maharana's versatility in the tradition of the *vaggeyakara*-s. Students of vocal music will find the publication a useful addition to their collection of books.

— MOHAN NADKARNI

KATHAKALIYILE KAIMUDRAKAL by Venu G., Kerala Sangeetha Nataka Akademi, Trichur, 1977, Rs. 25.00 (*In Malayalam*).

Dance notation is of fairly recent origin and is still in the process of being developed. In ancient times, the recording of dance movements on the walls of temples and caves, and in later days paintings of dancers contributed in no small measure to the rediscovery of ancient forms. Manuscripts and the oral traditions of the gurus and dancers ensured an unbroken continuity of form in India. This experience was a profound one and perhaps without parallel in the world of dance. Today when the dance has become popular, it is essential that the traditional norms, nurtured for centuries, be preserved and kept intact. It is perhaps with this view that G. Venu has compiled a new 'dance notation' for Kathakali and taken immense

effort for the purpose. In his alphabet of gestures he has evolved a new system that can be 'read'. The basic *mudra*-s and the *abhinaya* and movement involved in them have been given in detailed drawings, both frontwards and sideways. The drawings are simple and once the methodology has been mastered, it is hoped that dancers will be able to grasp the technique or at least become familiar with the language of Kathakali gestures. Each movement at finger, palm and waist has been closely studied and analysed in order to make the clarity of the gesture comprehensible to the student.

The *mudra abhinaya* of Kathakali contains a wealth of communication. The face and the hands play perhaps the most important part in the unfolding of a story. Sometimes during a performance an actor sits down on a stool and then begins a long monologue describing a situation: the conflict, the demands, the deceit, the protest, the hatred, the attachment implicit in the dance drama. It has the effect of physically communicating to the audience the emotional content of the play which is being enacted.

In the West there have been many attempts at notation, one of the best known being that of Rudolf von Laban. The first experiment—in the sixteenth century—was by Canon Jean Taboureau and many others followed. One of the works most used, however, seems to be *The Alphabet of the Movements of the Human Body* by V. G. Stepanov of the Imperial theatres of Saint Petersburg. The great ballerina Tamara Karsavina describes how these lessons were taught in the ballet schools in Russia. It is interesting to note that a special commission examined the system and 'concluded unanimously that this invention constitutes an absolutely new method for rendering in an exact and regular way the movements of the body as applied to choreographic art'. The meeting was held on February 24, 1891. The book deals with the movements of legs, the arms, the torso and the head. What is unusual is that each movement is linked up with music, for the book was meant for ballet dancers or as 'the language of the body in motion'.

I hope that G. Venu's commendable and painstaking work will receive the serious attention of dance students. The Kerala Sangeetha Nataka Akademi, which has been responsible for the publication, might go a step further and explore its usefulness through its application in the Kerala Kalamandalam where Kathakali is taught in its traditional form.

— MRINALINI V. SARABHAI

Record Reviews

Recitals by FAIZ AHMAD FAIZ and performances by leading artists. Vols. 1 and 2.

HMV ECLP 14607

HMV ECLP 14608

PARWEEN SULTANA (Vocal). Side One: *Raga* Deen Todi, *Khayal* Vilambit in Ektala; Tarana in Tritala. Side Two: *Raga* Rajni Kalyan, *Khayal* Vilambit in Ektala; *Khayal* Drut in Tritala.

HMV ECSD 2785 (Stereo).

PT. SHIVKUMAR SHARMA (Santoor). Side One: *Raga* Rageshwari, Madhyalaya in Jaytala; Drut in Tritala. Side Two: *Raga* Sohni in Ektala; Mishra Tilang in Kaharwa tala.

HMV ECSD 2784 (Stereo).

USTAD BAHADUR KHAN (Sarod). Side One: *Raga* Ahir Bivash, Gat: Vilambit, Drut, Jhala in Tritala. Side Two: *Raga* Dayabati, Alap, Jod and Gat in Tritala.

HMV ECSD 2532 (Stereo).

PRADEEP CHATTERJI (Vocal). Side One: *Raga* Hansdhwani in Roopak tala. Side Two: *Raga* Megh Malhar in Tritala.

HMV S/7 LPE 4025 Super-7 (Stereo).

The twin discs, entitled "Faiz Ahmad Faiz, Volumes 1 and 2" constitute a fitting tribute to the great poet on his sixty-fifth birthday and will no doubt be warmly received by lovers of Urdu verse and of music in India and Pakistan. Each of the four sides opens with recitations by the poet himself. Even listeners not so familiar with the language will not fail to respond to their beauty—his deep voice, his moving diction and the rhythm of the spoken word. The poems are drawn from his well-known collections, including *Zindan Nama* (Prison Testament) written in the prisons of Hyderabad, Karachi and Lahore during 1953-1957, the years which Faiz spent behind bars. The recitations are followed by renditions of the poet's *ghazal*-s by sixteen renowned singers from Pakistan and India. Each of them offers a Faiz *ghazal* and many of the pieces included in this excellent collection are favourites of *ghazal*-lovers. Music-wise the styles differ widely—from the classical and traditional to the modern and even the filmi, but the standard is uniformly high. If one were asked to name the three best *ghazal*-s from the collection, one would undoubtedly choose those three well-known *ghazal*-s rendered by the late Barkat Ali Khan (*Donon jahan teri mohabbat men*), the late Begum Akhtar (*Sham-e-firag ab na poochh*) and Mehdi Hassan (*Gulon men rang bhare*), singers who have profoundly influenced the *ghazal* and given it the high place it enjoys today in the world of music. The other singers are Noor Jehan, Ali Baksh Zahoor, Feroza Begum, Ferdausi Begum, Mashooq Ali Khan, Surayya Multanikar, Ummeed Ali Khan, Farida Khanum, Shaukat Ali, Malika Pukhraj, Taj Multani, Iqbal Bano and Amanat Ali Khan.

Parween Sultana sings what are described on the jacket as "rare melodies". The fashion nowadays is to coin new *raga*-s and give them attractive names. Curiously enough, many of them differ so slightly from the known ones that even the most knowledgeable will find it hard to detect their distinguishing features, if any exist at all. Parween Sultana sings Rajni Kalyan, which is a very close relative of the more familiar Gavati. Deen Todi, on the other side, sounds rather like Parameshwari, a *raga* attributed to Pandit Ravi Shankar and now quite popular. Parween Sultana sings with imagination and feeling. However, her fast *tana*-s in the upper reaches of the higher octave (which she can only render through an unnatural voice projection) mar the solemnity of her earlier *alapi* and of the moods she has succeeded in creating. Perhaps one could condone such occasional lapses in live concerts for the artiste counts at this point on applause from a section of the audience. But surely they have no place in a permanent record—a L.P. disc.

Most people will agree that as an instrument the santoor has severe limitations, particularly because no *meend* is possible. Despite this, Pandit Shivkumar Sharma's handling of the santoor is truly amazing, so much so that the artiste and his instrument have today become almost synonymous. His masterly treatment of Rageshwari on one side and of Sohni and the lighter Mishra Tilang on the other will fulfil the expectations of his several fans and satisfy most listeners. The success of the disc is also due in no small measure to the lively and yet sensitive accompaniment by the tabla virtuoso Ustad Zakir Hussain. Those more interested in rhythm should find Rageshwari set in the uncommon 13-*matra* Jayatala extremely absorbing.

By contrast Ustad Bahadur Khan's sarod disc is disappointing. This is partly due to what appears to be poor recording quality, resulting in quite unpleasant effects at times. Ustad Bahadur Khan plays Ahir Bivash, a *raga* not heard before, and fails to impress. What is wanting in his presentation is clarity, particularly in the fast passages. The other side has Dayabati, yet another newcomer! Dayabati, as elaborated here, seems to lack the full-fledged structure that a *raga* should have. What one hears is mere echoes of some *raga*-s of the lighter variety—ones in which *thumri*-s, *dadra*-s and *dhoon*-s are often set. The listener is left with the feeling that the artiste's effort to treat this *raga* in the elaborate traditional manner (of *alap*, *jod* and *gat* in Tritala) has been in vain.

The last record (Super-7) introduces a young vocalist from Allahabad, Pradeep Chatterji. He has a good voice and he sings the *khayal*-s in Hansdhwani (set to Roopak) and Megh Malhar (in Tritala) with a fair degree of competence. But the rendering lacks mature structuring. For instance, the somewhat elementary *sargam*-s are poorly conceived and indifferently sung; they tend to disturb the even flow of the melodies rather than help unfold their *raga* patterns.

—SATYENDRA TRIVEDI

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Nariman Point, Bombay 400 021

SOME FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Programme	Date	Venue
1. GHORA BHEESHANA (Yakshagana Puppet Show) The only programme in Bombay of one of the finest puppet groups of India en route to Europe.	2/3/78	Jhaverbhai Patel Sabhagriha
2. RUSTOM-SOHRAB A play in Hindi by the 'HUM' Dramatical and Cultural Society, New Delhi.	9/3/78	Bhulabhai Desai Auditorium
3. Inauguration of an exhibition of water colours and drawings in facsimile prints of Gustav Klimt and Egon Schiele. (In collaboration with the Consulate General of Austria.)	27/3/78	Jehangir Nicholson Museum of Modern Art
4. Laxmi Shanmukham (Bharata Natyam) Balasaraswati— <i>Padam-s</i> Laxmi Shanmukham is the only daughter of the great Balasaraswati and her style is a replica of her mother's. Balasaraswati will sing the <i>padam-s</i> during the performance and that alone will be a rare experience.	5/4/78	Tejpal Auditorium